



PTILOTTIS SONORUS: *Gould.*

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Singing Honey-eater.

Ptilotis sonorus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VIII. p. 160.

Doó-rum-doó-rum, Aborigines of the lowland, and

Gool-bó-ort, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

Larger Honey-sucker, Colonists of Swan River.

I HAVE abundant evidence that the range of this species extends across the entire continent of Australia from east to west; I found it very numerous on the Namoi and other portions of the interior of New South Wales, and equally plentiful in a part of the country of a similar character to the northward of Adelaide, and it is also one of the commonest birds of the colony of Swan River. It does not, I believe, extend very far north, at least no examples have as yet been sent from the northern parts of the country. Moderately-sized trees, particularly *Casuarinæ* and *Banksiæ*, thinly scattered over grassy plains and the crowns and sides of low hills, are its usual coverts, and I have never found it in the brushes which form so peculiar a feature in New South Wales, and which are the ordinary abode of several other species of the genus. In Western Australia it enters the gardens and commits considerable havoc among the fruit-trees, particularly figs, the seeds of which appear to be its most favourite food. It also feeds upon insects, which are principally sought for among the branches; but it frequently descends and seeks for them and small seeds on the ground, when it hops around the boles and beneath the branches of the trees in a most lively manner.

As its name implies, it possesses the power of singing, and for an Australian bird, and particularly a Honey-eater, in no ordinary degree; its notes being so full, clear and loud as to be heard at a considerable distance, and very much resembling those of the Missel Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*). In South Australia I heard it in full song in the midst of winter, when it was one of the shiest birds of the country, and I find that in the memoranda made at the time I have described its notes as full, loud and ringing.

It is exceedingly pugnacious in disposition, often fighting severe battles with the Wattle Birds (*Anthochaeræ*), and other species even larger than those.

Its flight is undulating and tolerably rapid.

The breeding-season commences in August and terminates in December. The nest is a frail, round, cup-shaped structure, the materials of which vary in different situations; those observed by me in New South Wales being composed of fine dried stalks of annuals thinly lined with fibrous roots woven together with spiders' webs, and suspended by the rim to two or three fine twigs near the centre of the tree; on the other hand, those observed by Mr. Gilbert in Western Australia were formed of green grasses, which become white and wiry when dry, matted together with the hair of kangaroos or opossums, lined with fine grasses and the down of flowers, and placed in a thick scrubby bush at about three feet from the ground.

The eggs are usually two, but occasionally three in number, of a light yellowish buff, thickly freckled with small indistinct reddish brown marks; or of a nearly uniform fleshy buff without spots or markings, but of a deeper tint at the larger end; their medium length is eleven lines, and breadth eight lines.

Crown of the head and all the upper surface greyish olive; wings and tail brown, margined on their external webs with greenish yellow; lores, space around the eye and broad line down the sides of the neck black; ear-coverts pale yellow, behind which is an obscure spot of greyish white; throat and under surface pale yellowish grey striated with light brown; irides dark brown; bill black; legs and feet greenish grey.

The female is like the male in colour, but smaller in all her dimensions.

The Plate represents the two sexes and a nest of the natural size on a branch of a *Casuarina*.